

The Haddock House

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Summary: "Walking into the Haddock household was essentially like pulling up that lobster trap that'd been forgotten for a few years in that one deep tide pool that even the cool kids wouldn't brave in the summer. You never really knew what to expect." Hiccup is Hiccup, Toothless is not helping, Stoick is longsuffering, And Astrid shows up to help the two with impeccable timing. Oneshot.

The Haddock House

Walking into the Haddock household was essentially like pulling up that lobster trap that'd been forgotten for a few years in that one deep tide pool that even the cool kids wouldn't brave in the summer.

You never really knew what to expect. And if you guessed, you'd probably end up wrong.

Toothless was only one dragon, and Hiccup was only one Viking, but then again, over the years, their names had acquired a certain reputation. There was a definite connotation of mystery and free-thinking to the pair, a strange mixture of madness and brilliance that, when mixed together and tucked away behind the longsuffering walls of the Haddock home, drifted out to any passer-by in a clear message of run away now, run away fast.

Hiccup was crazy, (a well known fact) and Toothless was his muse, who tended to goad him on in his madness. So whether it be molten metal, dragon hatchlings who'd just discovered their fire, chemical experiments or the odd mechanical-engineering mishap, there was sure to be an unusually high chance of disaster whenever they holed themselves away in a locked room together.

Enter Stoick the Vast: Viking Chief, ruler of Berk, and by all rights, head of the Haddock Household. He thought he might want to scratch the last bit from his title, because it wasn't really true

anymore. He'd been usurped: by a toothpick-sized son with an overactive brain and a dragon that enjoyed lighting things on fire.

"Blistering barnacles," Said Gobber the Belch in an exasperated tone, rolling his head around to look up the hill, toward the ruckus that Stoick was trying valiantly to ignore. "Third time today!"

Stoick hadn't known that, because he'd been avoiding the house since two days before, when Hiccup had pulled an all-nighter with his sketchbook and eaten nothing but cottage cheese for breakfast and not noticed that it was two days bad. After studying the sleep-deprived, crazed look in his son's eyes for approximately two and a half seconds, Stoick had grabbed his helmet, glared at Toothless, and had gotten out of the house as fast as he could. He'd resolved to come back when the explosions stopped.

There'd been three so far that day — or at least, according to Gobber. He wondered if Hiccup had lost any other limbs yet, or knocked off any more of the nub he'd already acquired. Stoick sighed, picking up his tankard. When he lowered it back down past his eyes, Gobber was glaring at him.

"Don't look at me like that," He spat, taking another swig. Gobber continued to glare. "I'm not responsible for every mess he makes! Hiccup's a man, now, he can take care of himself."

"No he can't."

"Yes, he can,"

"He really can't, though,"

"Yes, he can."

"Not when he's in one of his moods!"

"He's always in a mood!"

"Exactly my point!" Gobber gestured up the hill, where black smoke was beginning to billow out of the windows. Only the most bored of the villagers turned to notice.

"Come on, Gobber," Stoick pleaded, "you know how he is,"

"Which is exactly why you need to go make sure he's not in any less of one piece than he was when you last saw him,"

"Toothless'll take care of him,"

"Toothless isn't in one piece either, need I remind you,"

"He's fireproof, Gobber!"

"That he may be, but he's not Hiccup proof, that much's been proven!"

"Ugh!" Stoick hauled himself up "If you're so intent on making sure he's not cut himself in two again, then why don't you go up there?"

"Oh, no," Gobber said, wagging his arm-tongs in Stoick's face, "I've already lost two limbs, you've got four to spare. 'Sides, he's your son."

Stoick grumbled under his breath, "Sometimes I think he's the spawn of Loki himself," he said, though he didn't mean it. Gobber chuckled, and fetched a shield from behind his counter.

"You might need this," He said. Stoick took it begrudgingly.

"If he has lost another limb, you'll be cleaning it up," Stoick tossed over his shoulder.

"Oh, aye. Should I get out the bandages or the brandy?"

"Both."

"Probably for the best."

* * *

><p>When he reached the top of the hill, he stopped to listen for a moment. There was an odd crackling noise inside, a sound that didn't sound exactly like fire, but would probably end up being fire anyway. There was some smoke leaking out from beneath the front door. Behind it all, Stoick could hear Hiccup talking. Well, at least he wasn't dead or unconscious.</p>

_ "No! Nonono, Toothless, that's not helping! Look, justâ€¦ no, nono, the other one, and don't pull it down, that'll just- OW-whattheGAHH! TOOTHLESS!" _

And he wasn't crying in pain, either, which was probably supposed to be reassuring. He could hear a crash that sounded very metallic, and thump that Stoick had come to recognize Toothless' hopping to the ground floor.

"_Great. Thanks, bud._" Hiccup said sarcastically.

Toothless trilled lowly, and Hiccup sighed. _ "Okay. Okay, now just, keep your tail to yourself, okay? You're sure to knock something else over. I'll figure out somethingâ€¦" _ He grunted loudly, struggling with something, and then sighed. _ "Hopefully." _

Stoick thought that maybe, some years ago when Hiccup's leg was still tender and Stoick still had guilt hanging around his neck, when he and Hiccup were just still just getting to really know each other again, he would have been concerned about all this. Now? He had to work at it.

Stoick's desensitization was completely Hiccup's fault, of course.

"If I come, will I set off another explosion?" He'd learned to ask about these things.

"_Dad! I, uhhhh, well, it'sâ€¦ nooooâ€¦_"

"Right," Stoick grabbed the door handle.

_ "Nono! Dad, you don't really have to - I'm fine, it's just a bit" _

Stoick said nothing, and pushed open the door with an astonishing amount of calm.

Hiccup was dangling upside-down from the upstairs loft, his false leg detached and thrown to a location unknown, his good leg tangled up hopelessly in what looked like a fishnet that'd had an affair with chain bola and been sneezed on by a dragon. Errant flames burned around the room.

"Hey, dadâ€|" Said Hiccup, smiling idiotically.

Stoick looked around, and saw that Toothless was stamping out a fire on a mass of rope. It continued to smoke as Toothless trilled at his rider's father. Hiccup continued to swing creakily back and forth around Stoick's eyelevel, red-faced and slightly scorched.

Wordlessly, Stoick stepped up to his son, reached out, and snubbed out a sizzling spark that had already charred half of the meager beard that Hiccup had been determinedly growing for the past six months.

"Thanks, dad."

Stoick sighed. He wasn't soft, he really wasn't. He wanted to deck the boy, he should've. But Hiccup must've specifically designed his lopsided grin so that even as his father seethed in anger, he couldn't even think of growing too angry.

"What are you doing, son?" Stoick asked.

"Uuhmmâ€|" Hiccup looked sideways

"Or would you like to stay hanging there for the rest of the day?"

"Well, I, I mean, I was just trying to figure out which one would work, and, but then it caught fire, which, when you think about it it's really rather ironic,"

Stoick was only partially listening. "Where's your leg gotten to?"

"Errrmm," Hiccup twisted around, looking across the room toward the fire place. "Yeah, the top bit kindaâ€| caught fire. Tossed it somewhere over there. Yeah, I'll have to reconstruct that pretty soonâ€|"

Stoick found it sizzling by the fireplace, and the blackened wood top crumbled when he picked it up. Hiccup watched him.

"I still have those crutches for emergencies, up by my bed, but ehhhâ€| can't reallyâ€| move."

Stoick sighed and dropped the useless prosthetic, a pithy comment on

his tongue, but before he could say anything, he was interrupted.

"Hiccup?"

"Astrid! Uhhâ€|. Hiccup began a renewed effort to right himself, and was still struggling like a beached octopus when Astrid appeared in the doorway.

"Stormfly and I could see the smoke from above Raven's peak! Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, what in all of Midgard are you doing in here?"

Hiccup fell back down from his struggling and swung like a giant pendulum in front of Astrid. "Oh, you knowâ€| stuff," He said, his face beat red, and not just because he was upside down. Toothless perked up at Astrid's voice and came over to say hello. Hiccup's head smacked painfully against the dragon's neck as he swung past. "Ow!" He cried, eliciting no sympathy.

Astrid coddled Toothless' face as she said, "which, of course, involves incendiary chemicals andâ€| fishing nets?"

"Look, I can explain-

"I'd love to hear it," Astrid walked by. "Evening, Sir," She tipped her head at Stoick, who nodded, glad to have someone else do the lecturing for once.

"Look, I was trying to make a fire-retardant net to use in the ring-

"On the dragons?" Astrid asked, inspecting the remains of Hiccup's left leg by the fire.

"Yeah, I mean," Hiccup tried with laughable success to twist around towards Astrid. "You know how the young Nightmares are, they're constantly setting themselves on fire, and it's dangerous when new riders are in there. So, I thought I'dâ€| make a safety net."

"To put out fires?" Astrid tossed the leg aside.

"Er, yeah, to you know, throw over them when they light themselves on- OW! Toothless! Tail to yourself!"

Astrid snorted and shot Stoick a look that made the chief smile. She turned and casually walked up the stairs.

"Look, I was just trying to get a net covered in a fire-retardant, and-

"Meaning it puts out fires," Astrid asked from the loft, admiring the view of burnt building around her.

"Wellâ€| yeah."

Stoick looked around at the flames sizzling around the house.

"Right," Astrid said, rummaging.

Hiccup sighed. "Look, I didn't know what kind of substance might put out fires, so I've been testing some over the past few daysâ€| I finally found one this morning, well, I _thought _ I found one. I mean, it worked well enough in small amounts, and big-ish amounts, so I went ahead and coated the net with it, and had toothless light a fire, and tossed the net on it, but uh, I think it doesn't quiteâ€| put _out _ the fire as much as it does _absorb it_, so in large amounts, it kinda works, for a few minutes, before it, wellâ€| "

Astrid appeared over the edge of the loft, and heaved an axe hard down on the taught rope net that was caught on the ledge. Hiccup promptly fell to the floor in a heap.

"OW! "

"Exploded, were you going to say?"

"Ughhhâ€| " Hiccup's face was smashed against the floor. "â€|yeah." It took a minute for him to untangle his arms enough to push himself up. Toothless was waiting with an interested expression when he finally managed it. "Thanks for the help, bud," he said sarcastically.

Astrid had made it back down the stairs and around to hiccup, who looked something like a flopping merman, if mermen's tails were ever made of fishnets.

"Your discoveries have been destructive as always, Hiccup," She said dryly. "Toothless, go stamp out those fires, will you?"

"Oh sure, let the _dragon_ put out the fires."

"Well you obviously can't manage it."

"Howwas _I_ supposed know it would do that?"

"I don't know, you're the genius around here, you figure it out."

"I thought I _had_,"

"And yet here we are."

"You could _help_, you know," He cried rather ridiculously from the ground. Astrid rolled her eyes and crouched by him with a knife to cut him free. As their bickering continued, Toothless roamed the house, pouncing on every stray flame like it was a game, and wagged his tail in Stoick's face when he got to the back of the house.

Stoick found himself watching the pair with a strange feeling rising from the back of his mind, like he was sinking into the background, watching his own life being lived by someone else. His lecturing, his sighing and scoffing, his cleaning up Hiccup's messes, his listening to Hiccup's rantings, but this time, Astrid was doing it all for him.

And she was taking it all infinitely better than he could ever manage.

Stoick wasn't blind. He'd known that his son and the young Hofferson had had a 'thing' for each other for years, even if they'd buried the rare kiss and endless flirting beneath a crust of semi-violent friendship and bickering. But before that exact moment in time, Stoick hadn't felt incredibly strongly about their relationship either way. But then, in that moment, as he looked about his half-burnt house and the tramping dragon and his son tangled in a goopy fishnet, arguing with an infinitely longsuffering and lovely viking woman beside him, Stoick found that he found he did care. In fact, he cared quite a bit, for his own sake and theirs.

When he finally came back from his thoughts, Toothless was gnawing on Hiccup's ruined leg with curiosity, and Hiccup was balancing on his feet — er, foot, sooty and bedraggled in front of Astrid. He stood a good head taller than her, these days, and she had to tilt up her head for him to see her cheeky smile as she handed him a pair of crutches.

"A disaster a day, dragon boy. Why don't we go see if we can put you back together again?"

Hiccup had a stupid smile on his face that Stoick recognized, and he suddenly felt the need to cut the pair off before anything else happened between the two, who must've forgotten that Stoick was still there.

"Astrid," He called from the back, and the girl turned suddenly.

"Sir?"

"It seems that our kitchen is not fit for dinner tonight. Do you think you could ask your mother if we might use her stove for one night?"

She smiled. "I'm sure she'd be more than happy to help, sir." She turned to go out the door, but paused briefly to wipe off a smudge of soot that was trying to look like half a mustache on Hiccup's lip. She didn't miss the bright blush that spread over his face, but she didn't care, either.

"Hiccup?"

"Uhhhhuh? huh?" He said intelligently.

"Clean up before you come tramping in my house, alright?"

"Uhhhhmm,"

"Good." She turned on a heel and stepped out of the house. Hiccup watched her go, and shuffled around a bit on his crutches. Stoick blinked, and carried on with what he wanted to say in the only way he knew how to say it: bluntly.

"Hiccup, you need to get out of this house."

Hiccup scoffed. "I know I'm dirty, dad, but it's not really_ that_ bad, I can just—"

"No, son, I mean you need to live somewhere else."

Hiccup looked up like he'd been slapped, the whites of his eyes stark against his dirty face. "Butâ€| _dad_, whyâ€| I'm sorry, look, I'll clean it up, I won't do any more experiments in here, I swear,-"

Stoick came to stand in front of him. "It's time, Hiccup."

"Dad, why are you-"

"You need to build your own house."

"My _own_-_" Hiccup looked around himself "my own _house_, dad, I can't, I mean, this is where I've lived sinceâ€| I couldn't possiblyâ€| Wait." He froze, and his panicked expression turned to something else. "My own _house_. Dad, I can't, I- you know what that means, if I were to start building my own house, everyone would think I was going toâ€|" He looked up and realized that his father was smiling behind that bushy red beard. "â€|goingâ€|toâ€|" Stoick was glancing meaningfully out the door, where Astrid had gone not too long ago. "_dad!"_ Hiccup was bright red.

"You've been dancing around behind her for years, son, you're both well of age. It's about time you made a decision."

"Butâ€| th-why â€"Dad, why _now?!"

"Because you've blown up my house. Again." Stoick looked around. "And I've realized in the past ten minutes that, should you finally take young Astrid as your wife, she will be responsible for your messes. Odin knows she takes it better than I can."

"Oh, thanks, dad, I'm really feeling the consideration over here," Hiccup grumbled, and shifted on his crutches.

"Good. You can talk to her parents at dinner tonight."

Hiccup was sputtering. "Wh-_tonight_?! Dad, I _don't have a leg_!"

"You haven't had that leg for years, son."

"You know what I meanâ€| and I'm filthy,"

"Bathe,"

"â€|my beard is still on fire."

Stoick looked up. "Shave, then."

Hiccup pouted, and Stoick thought he might've said "I liked that beard," but he wasn't sure. After a long, quiet moment, Hiccup sighed.

"â€|You really think she'd say yes?" he asked, and from his tone, Stoick could tell Hiccup had considered the idea plenty of times before.

"Hiccup, she came all the way up here to cut you out down and out of a flammable net of your own making, and is now offering to feed you from her own kitchen and help you repair your leg. And you know she'd do it all again, given the chance. And knowing you, she'll get plenty of chances." Stoick looked over at his son, who was bright red and fiddling with the handles on his crutches. He stood like that for a minute or two before he looked over at toothless.

"Well thenâ€¦ come on, buddy. I need your help fetching some bath water. Dad, you have a razor?"

"I can fish something up."

"Right. This is another thing I didn't think I'd be doing this morning. You sure this is a good idea?"

"As good as any. Now for Odin's sake, go bathe. Before you blow up the house again."

* * *

><p>In the end, it was a good idea.</p>

Astrid had punched him when he asked her parents, firstly because he'd done it without telling her first, secondly because it'd taken him so many years to muster up the courage. After that, it'd been up to Mr. Hofferson and Stoick to agree on the terms, meanwhile Astrid and Hiccup snuck off to the forge to spend a romantic evening covering themselves in soot and metal smell as they repaired Hiccup's prosthetic foot.

All in all, a good first date as an engaged couple, by Viking standards at least.

It was early morning before the fathers had agreed on terms (and consumed enough mead to make the meeting worthwhile) but by the next morning it was official and announced in front of the entire village in the hall, to great applause and a few 'finally's at the back of the room. Construction started on the new house within a week, and Hiccup of course had drawn up all of the plans. Six months later, the house was finished in all its odds and ends, including a special fire-proofed workplace fitted with a workbench and a shelf for all of Hiccup's sketches.

The fireproofing had been Astrid's idea.

They were married in the Autumn, and that winter, when Hiccup's cabin fever would be reaching its height in tandem with his harebrained ideas, Stoick reveled in having his house to himself, without the threat of impending destruction.

Whenever he heard an explosion and Astrid's surprised "HICCUP!" from slightly up road on the hill, he would smile, laugh, and sink further back into his chair, because it wasn't his problem anymore.

"Should've made him do that years ago," Stoick said to himself.

The Haddock household might've been as treacherous a residence as ever, but if anything, it wasn't Stoick's house. Haddock the

Younger would rather quickly become known as even more of an eccentric in the years to come, because of his strange house with more than two rooms, constructed with whirring mechanics and gadgets in the walls, with a childish dragon and a violent wife " and that was all before they started having children of their own.

Haddock the _Senior,_ however, would only ever have his house known as that of an old Viking hero who, after living with _far_ too much excitement for twenty-two years of his life, loved nothing more than peace and quiet and a good roaring fire.

"I told you he couldn't look after himself," Gobber told Stoick on a cold winter's night by the fire, his tankard hand full of mead.

"He doesn't have to, now " and as long as it's not me, he can blow up as many things as he wants."

A low booming noise, followed by the clatter of pots and pans echoed across the way.

"Hmm," Gobber took a swig. "Fifth tonight " what d'you think he'll stop at?"

"Six."

"A barrel of me best says it'll be seven."

Stoick smiled and took another drink. "You're on."

* * *

><p>AN: I don't really know what happened there. I rediscovered my obsession with this movie a week or so ago, when I needed a happy place to escape to while stressing out over midterms. I wanted to write something for it again, and something happy. And this came out. So I hope you enjoyed it, and I hope anyone who gets my alerts isn't too angry with me for not updating any of my other stories.

On that note, I've actually been getting some legitimate _hate mail_ from people who want me to update some stories I haven't touched in a while. I'm really sorry. I am. But I do have a life, and I don't get paid to do this, soâ€| please cut me some slack. This is all just for fun. I'll try. I will. But I can't promise anything.

End
file.